

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Entry of the following amendments is respectfully requested in order to place the present Application in condition for allowance:

1-16. (canceled)

17. (previously presented) A method for authenticating a spare vehicle key to be used with a vehicle in the absence of a regular key, the method comprising the acts of:

providing the spare vehicle key with an identification number prior to requesting authentication of the spare key;

transmitting a random number generated by the key and the key identification number to the vehicle;

transmitting the random number generated by the key to a central station with an identification number of the vehicle from a source other than the vehicle;

transmitting the random number generated by the key from the central station to the vehicle using an encoding associated with the vehicle identification number;

comparing the random number generated by the key received from the central station with the random number generated by the key received from the key by the vehicle;

transmitting the key identification number to the central station from the vehicle if the key random numbers match;

checking the transmitted key identification number by the central station;  
and

authenticating the spare vehicle key and sending an authorization signal  
from the central station to the vehicle.